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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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SUBJECT: NEW ARGENTINE ATOMIC ENERGY CHIEF STILL SETTling IN

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0236

¶1. (U) This cable is sensitive but unclassified, and not for Internet distribution.

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Summary  
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¶2. (SBU) Ambassador Wayne called on recently appointed Argentine Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) President Norma Boero February 29. The ambassador thanked Boero for CNEA's cooperation in the successful November 2007 joint operation to remove the last of Argentina's highly-enriched uranium to the U.S. Boero has been focusing on administrative issues within CNEA since her appointment a little over a month ago, but that is likely to change with her travel to Vienna to attend this week's IAEA Board of Governor's meeting. Boero confirmed that the recent report about joint Argentine-Brazilian development of a nuclear submarine was a fabrication. End Summary.

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An Operational Success  
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¶3. (SBU) The ambassador visited new (appointed January 17) CNEA President Norma Boero February 29 to laud our bilateral nuclear cooperation and to introduce himself. The ambassador gave special thanks to CNEA staffers who participated in the November 2007 Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI) joint operation that repatriated the last of Argentina's highly-enriched uranium to the U.S. That operation was the subject of a mostly-positive article in leading circulation daily Clarin February 26.

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No Confirmation of JSCNEC Dates  
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¶4. (SBU) When Ambassador Wayne asked whether Argentina had decided to accept our suggested dates of April 22-25 for this year's Joint Standing Committee on Nuclear Energy Cooperation (JSCNEC), Boedo was unable to respond definitively. However, a representative of Argentina's nuclear regulatory agency (ARN) confirmed that her agency had accepted the dates. Elena Maceiras, ARN's Director of Institutional Relations,

told the ambassador that ARN had so informed the MFA. As of March 4, though, the MFA had not confirmed the April 22-25 dates.

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Nuclear Cooperation with Brazil  
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15. (SBU) The ambassador asked Boero whether the press had correctly reported all nuclear-related elements of the cooperation agreements signed by Presidents Fernandez de Kirchner and Lula February 22 (reftel), noting that a reported deal to cooperate on the construction of a nuclear submarine had been subsequently denied by both countries. Boero replied by confirming that the submarine partnership was an invention, and cautioned the ambassador not to place too much trust in the Argentine press. Boero also confirmed that Argentina is concentrating on developing enrichment capability to produce low-enriched fuel for its two existing nuclear power plants and for another under construction. She did not comment on whether Argentina will indeed pursue a joint enrichment program with Brazil, as reported reftel.

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Comment: Settling In  
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16. (SBU) Boero is a chemical engineer who has worked at the CNEA since 1979. Despite her years of experience, she comes across as a rather timid individual who has yet to find her footing as CNEA president. For example, she brought nine colleagues to the meeting with the ambassador, who was accompanied only by a notetaker, and she was quick to defer to those colleagues throughout the meeting. When the ambassador asked how we could best collaborate, Boero replied that while she is sure that we will "have a lot to do together" in time, she has been focusing exclusively on intra-organizational issues. Finally, when her nominal supervisor, Ministry of Planning Undersecretary for Coordination Roberto Barratta, entered the meeting to greet the ambassador, Boero grew even more reticent. She is clearly still settling in. Boero is traveling to Vienna for the IAEA Board of Governors' meeting this week, and we encourage UNVIE staff with an opportunity to interact with the Argentine delegation to introduce themselves to her.  
WAYNE